

University of Wisconsin Colleges Institutional Assessment Report 2003-2004

Executive Summary

The select mission of the UW Colleges is to “prepare students for success at the baccalaureate level of education” and “provide the first two years of a liberal arts general education that is accessible and affordable.” Two indicators of student performance illustrate the record of the UW Colleges in achieving that mission:

- UW System data indicates that students who transfer from the UW Colleges persist at the highest rate of any group of transfers to UW System universities.
- UW Colleges’ transfers complete baccalaureate programs at the highest rate of any transfers to the UW System.

As part of their March 2003 institutional visit, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) conducted a review of the UW Colleges assessment program within both the context of the select mission of the Colleges, and the larger national context of the role of assessment of student learning outcomes in the implementation of federal policy. While impressed with the conceptualization of our general education degree proficiencies, the HLC identified assessment as an area that needed greater attention by all parts of the institution – faculty, staff, administration and students. In particular, they identified three areas of major concern: program, people and process.

Following the HLC visit, the 2003-2004 academic year was in many ways a watershed for the UW Colleges assessment process. The Chancellor established assessment as the top institutional priority for 2004-2005 and assessment was the centerpiece of the 2003 Fall Convocation and his 2003-2004 campus visits. A systematic review of the existing assessment program was undertaken by the Senate Assessment Committee (SAC), the department assessment coordinators (DAC), the institutional assessment coordinator (IAC), other members of the Office of Academic Affairs, campus deans, and department chairs. The Senate Steering Committee and the Senate Academic Policy Committee identified changes in Senate policies, which were considered and approved by the UW Colleges Senate. (For details, see “The Change Process” section of the report.) In addition, the Office of Academic Affairs engaged in an assessment of the Engaging Students in the First Year (ESFY) initiative. (For details, see “Other Efforts in Assessment”.)

Six major areas of programmatic changes resulted from a process guided by the SAC, the DACs and the IAC during face-to-face meetings between June 2003 and August 2004, together with the leadership provided by the DACs and 17 department chairs in unknown numbers of department meetings and teleconferences. (See “The Change Process: Goals and Objectives”.) The six areas of programmatic change were:

- Writing an assessment mission statement and deciding on a common set of terms
- Streamlining of the array of degree proficiencies (from 28 to 4)
- Designating performance indicators for each of the degree proficiencies
- Developing common evaluation standards (rubrics) to fit a common format and an existing scoring scale

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- Developing a common cycle for course selection and assessment reporting
- Developing a culture of assessment across all aspects of the student experience

Implementation of the assessment process was streamlined through the development of a common set of reporting instruments—one for department assessment and another for institutional assessment, and institutionalized through exchanges between the DACs and the SAC: DAC draft report, SAC review and response and DAC final report. Institutional priorities guide budget decisions, so the budget for assessment grew between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 principally to support the work of the DACs. (For details, see “Implementing the Assessment of General Education Proficiencies”.)

Another important change in the assessment process was that responsibility for collection and retention of individual student assessment data become an institutional function. The SAC, DACs and IAC and the senior institutional research manager developed a process to collect and manage student assessment data that involved:

- Universal participation by faculty and most instructional academic staff
- A regular cycle of course selection with high enrolling courses being assessed in the fall terms and sophomore level courses being assessed in spring terms
- The ability to track student assessments across terms, and to link assessment data to all other student information kept by the university
- Reporting and distribution of assessment information which maintains the privacy of students and instructors

The new reports were provided on a semester by semester basis, which enabled departments to track trends and begin discussions around changes in courses and curriculum, and the SAC and DACs to identify any problems with performance indicators and rubrics. (See “The Collection of Assessment Data for 2003-2004”.)

The changes in data collection and reporting enabled the institution, for the first time, to analyze data to:

- Test for consistent application of assessment rubrics
- Permit departments and disciplines to explore relationships between assessment and other forms of student performance evaluation, e.g. course grades. (See “Summary of Findings 2003-2004”.)

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General Introduction

This report describes the activities and accomplishments of the UW Colleges Assessment Program during the 2003-2004 academic year and provides a summary of the findings of the assessment of student learning that serve as a benchmark for ongoing assessment at the department, campus and institutional levels. Many of the activities and accomplishments described in this report were prompted by the Higher Learning Commission's review of our approach to assessment in the period covered in our self-study for continued accreditation. Consequently, much of this report describes critical structural changes that began with the drafting of a new assessment mission statement following the procedures of our shared governance system. Three factors coincided to create a delay in the submission of this report: the volume of activity surrounding these major changes, a sudden and unexpected vacancy in the leadership of the UW Colleges Senate Assessment Committee and a series of changes in the Office of Academic Affairs created by the UW Colleges Chancellor moving to a new position in August 2003.

State of Assessment in 2001-2003

Background

From its inception in 1994 the UW Colleges assessment effort has been in a constant state of revision and enhancement. The 2001-2003 assessment cycle was no exception to this. During this period a number of changes were made, all of which were intended to improve our understanding of student learning and enhance student achievement.

The 2001-2003 assessment cycle was the last prior to the most recent Higher Learning Commission accreditation review of the UW Colleges. That review was highly critical of the UW Colleges assessment effort and sparked a significant revision of the assessment program. For this reason 2001-2003 serves as an important marker for the UW Colleges Assessment effort.

Structure of Assessment

For the two-year period 2001-2003, assessment was carried out at three levels:

- At the department level for the assessment of discipline based course content
- At the institutional level for the assessment of general education proficiencies
- At the program (degree) level for the assessment of general education proficiencies for degree recipients

At all three levels of assessment, student achievement was measured using a 3 point scale of exceeds expectations, meets expectations, and fails to meet expectations. At the department and institutional levels a single set of courses were assessed in both the fall and spring terms; at the program/degree level a different set of courses were assessed in the spring semester only. For all three levels of assessment, reporting of results was done over a two-year cycle with an interim report at the end of 2001-2002, and a final report at the end of 2002-2003.

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Responsibility for Assessment

As of 2002-2003 the Senate Assessment Committee (SAC) was responsible for the coordination of all assessment activities and for the writing of the institutional assessment report. This coordination included the collection of assessment data from each Department Assessment Coordinator (DAC) and the sponsoring of two combined SAC/DAC meetings each year. At that time the Office of Academic Affairs had only a very limited role in the process. As a member of the SAC, the Associate Vice Chancellor served as the institutional assessment coordinator, and the role of the institutional researcher was limited to production of student rosters for one facet of the assessment program, and to conducting an audit of degree recipients to summarize exposure to the agreed upon general education proficiencies.

While responsibility for coordination of assessment lay with the SAC, individual departments had responsibility for all aspects of implementation. This included selecting the courses to be assessed, the content areas to be assessed for departmental level assessment, and the proficiencies to be assessed for the institutional and degree level assessments.

Implementation of Assessment

Implementation of the assessment program in the 2001-2003 cycle was characterized by diversity among departments as well as among instructors within each department. Departments were free to choose both the courses for assessment and the content areas or proficiencies to be assessed. Instructors were free to choose whether or not to participate in assessment, to create their own instruments for assessment or choose a department devised standard instrument, and to create their own rubrics, choose a department devised rubric, or, if using a standardized test, use a common scoring scale devised by the department. In the interim report for 2001-2003 it was noted that no two departments measuring the same performance indicator used the same rubric for measuring assessment. This diversity in implementation was virtually assured given the fact that responsibility resided in the departments, with the SAC and its academic affairs representative serving in a coordinating capacity.

Collection and Reporting of Assessment Data

The collection of assessment data was accomplished at the course/section level by each instructor. This individual student/class level data stayed with the instructor. At the end of each term the data for each class was summarized and sent on to the department assessment coordinators in aggregate form. For example, an instructor would indicate that for class XYZ, the analytical skill of demonstrating socially responsible thought was measured, and that 5 students exceeded expectations, 10 students met expectations, and 3 students failed to meet expectations. This aggregation of data by the instructor was done at all three levels of assessment when submitting data to the DAC.

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Each DAC had responsibility for submitting reports to the Senate Assessment Committee. For this reporting the class level data was further aggregated to the department/course level, and to the department level. For purposes of the institutional assessment report, each department's aggregate level data was included by the SAC in its report of the department level assessment, and was further aggregated to the institutional level by proficiency for the institutional and the program/degree level assessment reporting.

Use of Assessment Results

Documenting the use of assessment results was the responsibility of department assessment coordinators. Individual instructors were asked to submit comments describing the use of results to the DAC when they submitted their class assessment summaries. These comments were then incorporated into the department's report to the SAC, and summarized across departments in the report from the SAC to the senate.

Higher Learning Commission Concerns

During their visit in March 2003 the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reviewed the UW Colleges assessment program. This review was conducted within the larger national context of the role of assessment of student learning outcomes in the implementation of federal policy. While acknowledging that the conceptualization of general education degree proficiencies was "impressive," and recognizing the work of the Senate Assessment Committee to create a systematic program, the HLC identified assessment as an area that needed greater attention by all parts of the institution – faculty, staff, administration and students. In particular, they identified three areas of major concern: program, people and process.

Programmatically, the degree proficiencies were well conceptualized and articulated. However, the diversity and number of proficiencies (28) precluded assessment by all departments. This resulted in only a small percentage of degree students having been exposed to all proficiencies. Moreover, at the department level subject matter competencies were not clearly articulated. Common core student learning objectives were not identified and department assessment activities were not done systematically. Consequently, the assessment data that was collected was not useful in "closing the loop," i.e. guiding changes in curriculum and instruction.

The HLC report seemed to associate these programmatic problems with the failure of the faculty to take ownership of assessment. Despite some exemplary assessment efforts and the conscientious work of faculty on the Senate committee charged with oversight and guidance of the institution's assessment program, they pointed to the low rate of participation by faculty in the voluntary assessment program. At the campus level, they found neither a campus-based general assessment program, nor evidence of an ongoing

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discussion by campus faculty of assessment. In addition, they noted that very few students were aware of the UW Colleges assessment program. In short, there was no culture of assessment evident.

Part of the responsibility for the general lack of awareness of the institutional assessment program was attributed to a limited visibility of faculty and governance groups involved in systematic assessment of the student learning outcomes. The Senate Assessment Committee has delivered annual reports to the Senate, and the Institutional Assessment Coordinator prepared bi-annual reports on institutional assessment that were sent to the Senate Steering Committee. But the HLC saw no regular reporting at the department and campus levels of ongoing assessment activities and insufficient reporting to the principal governance body, the UW Colleges Senate. In short, the institutional governance processes had not made a regular place for assessment.

Changes in the UW Colleges Assessment program, 2003-2004

UW Colleges Assessment Efforts Entering 2003-2004

In many ways, the 2003-2004 academic year was a watershed for the UW Colleges assessment process. To prepare for these changes, a systematic review of the existing assessment program was undertaken. The review process included the cooperative contributions of the Senate Assessment Committee (SAC), the department assessment coordinators (DAC), the institutional assessment coordinator (IAC), other members of the Office of Academic Affairs, campus deans, and department chairs.

The review was prompted by comments made in the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation report discussed above. In the course of the review, many of the elements of the existing assessment program were found to be both effective and essential to the Colleges' efforts at assessing student learning, and so were kept for future cycles. For example, the assessment of both breadth of knowledge outcomes (discipline specific assessment) and general education outcomes (institutional assessment) was considered an important element and so was continued.

At the same time deficiencies in assessment noted in the HLC report were specifically targeted for close review and revision. These deficiencies need to be addressed prior to the completion of an interim report to be submitted to the HLC in September 2006. From this review a new assessment mission statement was drafted. This statement encompassed a renewed vision of how assessment can support and enhance the larger institutional mission. Guided by the revised mission, a process for change was developed, refined and implemented during the spring and summer of 2004. While the SAC and the DACs worked on the mission statement, proficiencies and rubrics, the Senate Steering Committee reviewed Senate policies to ascertain where assessment needed to be incorporated to address concerns identified in the self-study and by the HLC. In addition to Colleges-wide dissemination through the parties participating in the review, a

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description of this process was shared with Cecilia Lopez, formerly the UW Colleges' liaison at the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission, and one of the nation's leading authorities and proponents of student learning assessment.

The Change Process

1. Coming to agreement on changes to the assessment program - A number of positions, offices, and committees within the UW Colleges were involved in the revision of the institution's approach to the assessment process. The process involved meetings, consultation, and review among members of the Office of Academic Affairs, the Senate Assessment Committee, the Department Assessment Coordinators, the campus deans, and the academic department chairs. All of these groups came together to follow an extensive and consistent process for developing each change to the assessment program. The flowcharts below illustrate the process followed for making changes.

Figure 1: Changing the Assessment Program and Process

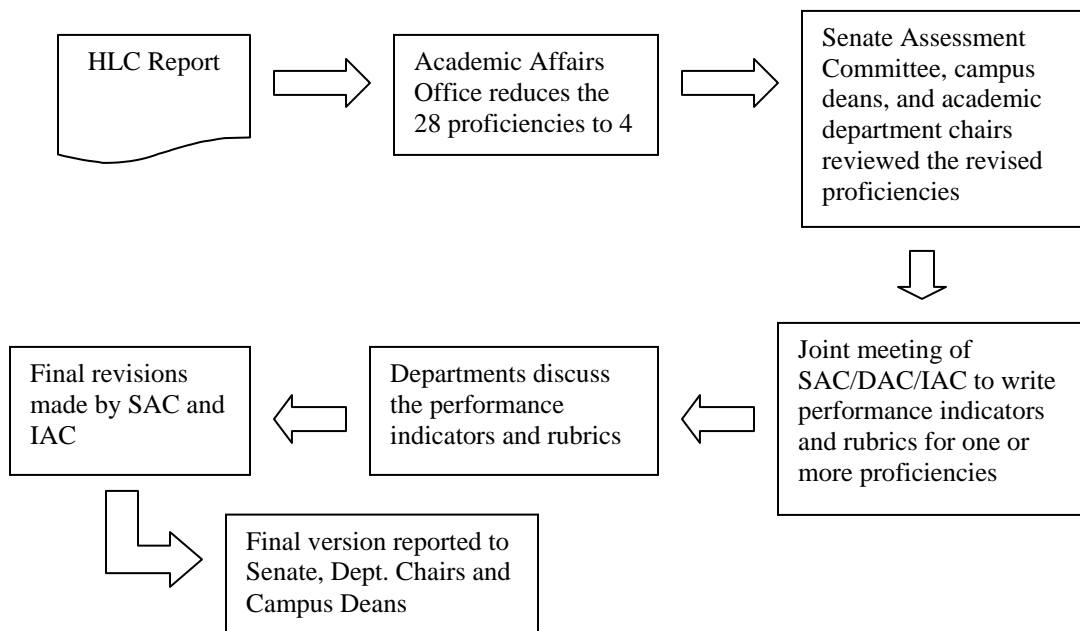
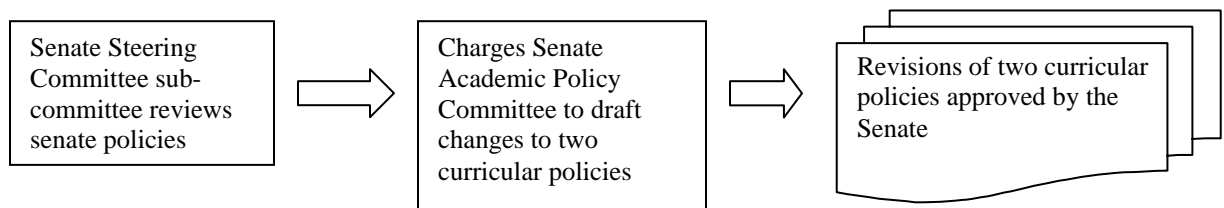


Figure 2: Changing Senate Policies to Incorporate the New Assessment Program



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The most extensive work done in revising and refining the assessment process, in particular revising the performance indicators and writing assessment rubrics, was done by the Senate Assessment Committee, the Department Assessment Coordinators, the Institutional Assessment Coordinator, and other members of the Office of Academic Affairs. A series of face-to-face meetings were held with all parties invited to participate. The result was a set of performance indicators and evaluative standards (rubrics) developed, analyzed, evaluated, and revised through interdisciplinary discussions. Simultaneously, an extensive review of Senate policies was conducted by a sub-committee of the Senate Steering Committee, which identified areas of Senate policy that needed revision to incorporate assessment procedures. The Senate Steering Committee charged the Senate Academic Policy Committee with drafting the changes that incorporated the assessment concerns. In May 2004, the Senate made changes to the Associate Degree and Course Syllabus policies. All of these changes are included in the 2005-2007 UW Colleges Catalog.

2. Sharing information with departments - Following the joint meetings described above, department assessment coordinators shared the completed performance indicators and rubrics with other instructors at department meetings, where time was set aside specifically to discuss the issue of assessment (the 2003 Fall Convocation was focused entirely on introducing the changes made to the assessment program, and a block of time during the departmental meetings was devoted to assessment). The DACs then sent the comments from these department meetings back to the senate assessment committee and to the institutional assessment coordinator (in 2003-2004 this position was held by the associate vice chancellor in the office of academic affairs). These comments were incorporated into the final drafts before submission to the senate and the university community.

Goals and Objectives of the Revised Assessment Program

1. A common language for talking about assessment – One of the first steps taken in revising the UW Colleges' assessment program was to develop a common set of terms to be used when discussing assessment. This common terminology included definitions of performance assessment, learning outcomes, performance indicators, and evaluation (assessment rubrics). In addition, a set of examples illustrating each of the definitions was developed, refined, and distributed to all members of the institution.

2. Reduction in the number of proficiencies - Another of the early steps undertaken was a reduction in the number of proficiencies from 28 to 4. These 4 proficiencies include:

- Analytical Skills
- Quantitative Skills
- Communication Skills
- Aesthetic Skills

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This reduction was undertaken in order to accomplish a number of objectives:

1. Make apparent to students the core general education skills they are expected to master as they fulfill the requirements of the UW Colleges' Associate of Arts and Science degree and help the institution measure and meet these learning goals.
2. Help students, faculty and staff of the institution as well as the general public better understand the common elements of the general education curriculum offered in the UW Colleges by focusing attention on the learning goals that correspond to that curriculum.
3. Clarify the goals of the assessment program. Twenty-eight proficiencies did not provide a clear idea of the goals of the program.

3. Designation of performance indicators - Building upon work completed prior to 2003, the Office of Academic Affairs assigned each of the 28 former proficiencies to one of the 4 newly devised proficiencies. Then, beginning in April 2003 with the new analytical skills proficiency, the Office of Academic Affairs in consultation with the Senate Assessment Committee, the Department Assessment Coordinators, and the academic department chairs revised these former proficiencies, using them as the starting point for a newly devised list of performance indicators.

4. Common assessment rubrics – A limitation of the prior assessment program was that skills described as “general education” were not being measured in the same way throughout the curriculum and across academic departments. It was determined that the development of common evaluative standards, to be used by all instructors regardless of discipline, would help to assure the comparability of assessment results. These evaluative standards or assessment rubrics were each written to fit a common format incorporating the already existing scoring scale of Exceeding Expectations (E), Meeting Expectations (M), and Failing to Meet Expectations (X). Each rubric gives the instructor enough information to score a student’s work on this three-point scale, and is written in such a way as to provide, to the greatest extent possible, an unambiguous methodology for scoring most assignments, tests or projects submitted by a student. This commonly agreed upon rubric, along with the common performance indicator, provides the basis for discussion of assessment among instructors, both across and within departments.

Late in the 2003-2004 cycle a number of instructors participating in the assessment process suggested alternative scoring schemes. However it was decided that we would keep the existing scheme through at least one complete cycle.

5. A common cycle for collecting and reporting general education assessment results

a. A common cycle for assessment of the four proficiencies – Having arrived at the four new proficiencies, a schedule for assessing these proficiencies was developed (see Table 1). This new schedule balances the need to assess all students who complete the Associate of Arts and Science degree in all four proficiencies, with the goal of allowing instructors the opportunity to review the results of assessment, and then make changes to instruction or curriculum based upon that review. It also enforces the assessment of no

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more than two proficiencies in any given academic year. This ensures that large numbers of students are being assessed in a variety of classes, across disciplines, in the same proficiency and very often using the same performance indicators. With students being assessed in a limited number of proficiencies across a range of disciplines we are able to measure the extent to which instructors have a common understanding of the performance indicators and the accompanying evaluative rubrics.

The proficiency rotation cycle for the period fall 2003 – spring 2008 is shown in Table 1. With each proficiency being assessed every other year, departments have time to discuss assessment results before revising curriculum or instruction.

Table 1: The Cycle for Assessing the Four Proficiencies

| Proficiency | Year Assessed | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Analytical Skills | 2003-2004 | | 2005-2006 | | 2007-2008 |
| Quantitative Skills | | 2004-2005 | | 2006-2007 | |
| Communication Skills | | 2004-2005 | | 2006-2007 | |
| Aesthetic Skills | | | 2005-2006 | | 2007-2008 |

b. A common cycle for course selection – Reflecting our mission as an institution that delivers the freshman and sophomore years of a liberal arts education, students seeking to earn the Associate of Arts and Science degree progress through the curriculum taking two different kinds of courses. Most freshmen begin their higher education by taking introductory courses. These tend to be high enrolling, and most are intended as a first course in any given discipline. Later, students will take higher level courses, which tend not to be first courses in a discipline, and/or are intended for students who have either already taken a course in the discipline, or have taken one or more courses in other disciplines that would have prepared them for the course. These are considered to be sophomore level courses. As part of our review and revision of the assessment program it was determined that in any given term we would focus our attention on one or the other of these two general categories of the curriculum, with all participants assessing the same category of courses based on this definition. Thus, in the 2003-2004 fall semester the institution focused its assessment efforts on students in high enrolled courses, and in the spring semester the institution focused on students enrolled in sophomore level courses. This same pattern was followed in the fall and spring semesters of 2004-2005.

c. A revised cycle for assessment reporting – Prior to the 2003-2004 academic year, the reporting of assessment data occurred on a two year cycle. With the changes to other parts of the assessment process described above, a decision was made to shorten the reporting cycle to one year, with data being collected and analyzed on a semester-by-

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semester basis. This allows more immediate feedback to instructors, department chairs, and to the Senate Assessment Committee. The additional work entailed by this switch to an annual reporting cycle was one factor in a decision to increase stipends for DACs.

6. Increased resources to support assessment

Along with increased participation and expectations for the assessment program, the Chancellor made a commitment to increase the financial support for the assessment program. In the fall of 2003, the Chancellor and the Senate established assessment of student learning as the first of five Institutional Priorities. This list of priorities would then guide budget decisions for the 2004-2005 academic year. The budget for assessment grew from \$10,000 in 2002-2003 to \$22,750 in 2003-2004. In keeping with our focus on departments, the increase in resources for 2003-2004 was directed entirely toward improving compensation for department assessment coordinators. The budget line for this expense was increased from \$8,500 in 2002-2003 to \$21,250 in 2003-2004. This was done in recognition of the increased workload and responsibilities of the DACs.

In addition to this substantial increase in support for assessment, the Office of Academic Affairs, in collaboration with the Senate Assessment Committee, began a review of the expectations for this new assessment program, and of the work that would need to be supported in order to meet those expectations. Ultimately this review would result in the rationale for the budget appropriations to the task of assessment in 2004-2005 and subsequent academic years.

7. Development of a culture of assessment – Given the new direction provided by the mission statement, the Colleges are developing a culture of assessment across all aspects of the student experience. This includes the expansion of traditional classroom student learning assessment, as well as extending assessment to include activities outside the classroom and across disciplines on each campus. Important accomplishments during this academic year were:

- In 2003-2004, the Chancellor established assessment as the top institutional priority for 2004-2005 and that priority was approved by the Senate Steering Committee and Senate Budget Committee. At the 2003 Fall Convocation, assessment was the centerpiece of the remarks of the Chancellor and Provost. During his campus visits, the Chancellor discussed assessment issues with faculty, staff, administrators and students.
- Beginning in 2003-2004, all faculty and all IAS with appointments of 40% or greater were expected to participate in student learning assessment.
- Department meetings held in conjunction with the Fall Convocation began with an hour or more devoted to discussion of assessment lead by the Department Assessment Coordinator(s).
- A new Senate policy requires a statement about assessment of student learning on course syllabi.
- Beginning in fall 2004, a report from the Senate Assessment Committee is included on the agenda of all UW Colleges Senate meetings.

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- A position description for a new campus assessment coordinator position was written for implementation in the 2004-2005 academic year.
- In 2003-2004, the Student Services Offices began planning for the assessment of the student orientation process.

Implementing the Assessment of General Education Proficiencies

Assessing Analytical Skills - The process described above began in spring 2003 and continued through the summer of that year. Performance indicators and rubrics were written during face-to-face meetings held in June and August, with final revisions made by the IAC following an SAC teleconference in late August 2003. The first set of performance indicators and rubrics completed were those that would allow instructors to measure student proficiency in analytical skills. We targeted analytical skills as our first proficiency for assessment because of previously gathered data which indicated that all departments, with the exception of World Languages, had one or more courses in which students were exposed to the general education skill of analysis. In the fall of 2003 instructors assessed analytical skills in high enrolling courses, and in the spring term assessed analytical skills in sophomore level courses.

Preparing to Assess Communication and Quantitative Skills - In January of 2004 the institutional coordinator, the SAC, and the DACs began the process of developing the performance indicators and rubrics for the communication and quantitative skills proficiencies, with a goal of implementing assessments for these two general education skills in the fall of 2004. Once again joint meetings were held in January, June, and August of that year. Because work was being done on two very different proficiencies at the same time, it was decided that participants would break into two groups based on the interest of the departments in assessing the proficiency, and based on the appropriateness of the proficiency to the disciplines. By the end of the summer of 2004 the performance indicators and rubrics were nearly in final form for implementation in the 2004-2005 year.

Preparing to Assess Aesthetic Skills - At the January 2004 meeting we also began discussion of the fourth and final proficiency – aesthetic skills (called aesthetic engagement at that time). During that meeting it became clear that we would not reach consensus on either the performance indicators that could be used to measure proficiency, nor on the appropriateness of including aesthetic skills as a general education skill that we were teaching. For that reason it was decided that a small subgroup of interested SAC and DAC members would work independently to write:

- a rationale for including aesthetic skills as a necessary general education outcome appropriate for students pursuing an Associate of Arts and Science degree, and
- performance indicators and rubrics for measuring this skill.

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The Role of the Departments in Assessment

While the Senate Assessment Committee is the governing body responsible for assessment in the UW Colleges, the departments were the main focus of activity in 2003 – 2004. Department chairs were strongly encouraged to include discussion of assessment at every department meeting. At department meetings during the Fall Convocation, all departments included time for discussion of assessment. In this way department faculty and instructional academic staff participated in the selection of performance indicator(s) and courses, and in the development of assignments, tests or projects for use in measuring proficiency.

Department Assessment Coordinators

Department Assessment Coordinators took on the major work of implementing the new assessment program and of creating a culture of assessment within departments. The DACs served as intermediaries between individual faculty and instructors and the SAC, explaining the new processes, performance indicators and rubrics so that reliable data would be gathered. They worked throughout the year to create a culture of assessment within their departments, with a goal of using this information to improve department curriculum and course instruction.

Together with the SAC and the IAC, department assessment coordinators developed a new annual reporting procedure:

- submit a draft report of activities and results to the SAC in mid August;
- receive comments on their drafts from the SAC that included suggestions for improvement by mid-September;
- submit their final report to the SAC by mid-October.

Because all department reports were sent in both draft and final form to the SAC, the SAC was able to serve as a clearinghouse, sharing the ideas from one department with any or all of the others. Through the SAC review and comment process, particular expertise developed in each department has been disseminated throughout the UW Colleges academic departments. The twice a year SAC/DAC meetings are an additional forum for sharing of successful models as well as ideas that have been tried and found inadequate.

In addition to implementing the institutional assessment plan, the DACs were given the responsibility of writing a discipline or department assessment plan. In 2003-2004, DACs were given the responsibility of working with their department colleagues to develop discipline-based learning objectives, which addressed disciplinary knowledge rather than general education skills. By the end of the 2003-2004 academic year, some departments had identified and tested discipline-based learning objectives. All departments are expected to have reached this goal by the end of the 2004-2005 academic year.

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The Collection of Assessment Data for 2003-2004

Background

The 2003-2004 academic year marked a significant transition in the role of data collection and reporting in the assessment process. In the terms prior to fall 2003, the collection and retention of individual student assessment data was solely the prerogative and responsibility of individual instructors. They collected these data and summarized them by class in reports to department assessment coordinators (DACs). The DACs in turn summarized class assessment data into departmental assessment reports and submitted these to the Senate Assessment Committee (SAC). The SAC then summarized these departmental reports in its annual report to the Senate. This system of collecting and retaining student assessment data at the individual instructor level allowed us to very quickly aggregate a lot of information at the lowest possible level for reporting of assessment activities. However, the system had a number of limitations:

- By keeping individual student class assessments at the instructor level it was difficult to present any quantitative information that could demonstrate an institutional perspective to assessment.
- It was nearly impossible to document in any way other than anecdotally the use of assessment data to improve the teaching and learning process, either at the department or the institutional level.
- The system did not allow for the collection of student assessment data across all classes and all terms in which the student was assessed, thus making it impossible to track the acquisition and mastery of general education skills by students over time.
- By keeping individual student class assessment data in the hands of individual instructors it was not possible to join these data to any of the other demographic, admission, or curricular information we know about our students. This meant that reporting of assessment results occurred in isolation and could not be integrated into the more general reporting of the experience of students while attending the UW Colleges.

Transition to Institutional Responsibility for Collection of Assessment Data

Given these limitations it was decided that the responsibility for collection and retention of individual student assessment data should become an institutional function. This decision brought with it a number of initial challenges, the most significant being that the PRISM student information system does not include any support for collecting and managing these data. This meant that a system for collecting, storing, and managing these data would need to be built. Another challenge was to provide safeguards against the inappropriate use of assessment results. This includes the use of assessment results by administrators as part of the tenure or merit review process. Information from other colleges and universities has indicated that this use of assessment data can result in diminished participation by instructors and in diminished quality of data. Disclosure of

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individual student names or identifiers would be another inappropriate use of assessment results since these data are not considered directory information and are therefore subject to student information privacy policies and procedures.

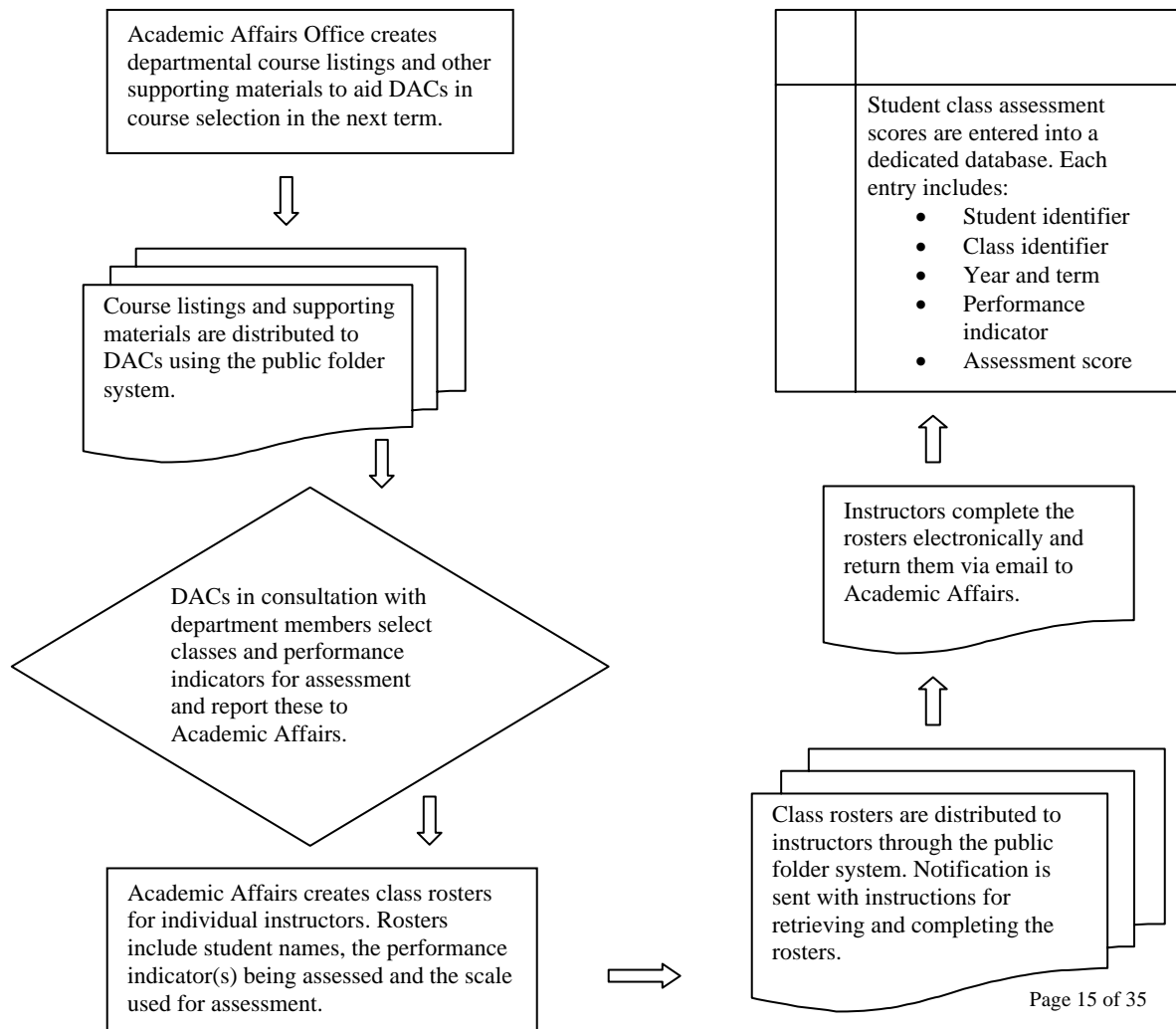
A New Process for Collecting Student Assessment Data

Over the spring and summer of 2003 a process was developed to collect and manage student assessment data. This process supports all of the goals of the new assessment program discussed above. Most notably these include:

- Universal participation by faculty and instructional academic staff with appointments of 40% or greater
- A regular cycle of course selection with high enrolling courses being assessed in the fall terms and sophomore level courses being assessed in spring terms
- The ability to track student assessments across terms, and to link assessment data to all other student information kept by the university
- Reporting and distribution of assessment information which maintains the privacy of students and instructors

The process of collecting assessment data is illustrated in the flowchart below.

Figure 3: Collecting Assessment Data



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Reporting of Assessment Data

The 2003-2004 academic year was transitional not only in our change to a new process for collecting assessment data, but in our process for reporting assessment data as well. The reporting of summarized assessment data to the SAC and DACs would now be the responsibility of the Office of Academic Affairs instead of individual instructors.

The need for a more complete disclosure of the assessment program was an underlying theme in the findings from HLC. To provide this disclosure we needed to devise reporting that provided evidence of the full range of assessment data collected, and present information that could be used by departments and by individual instructors to effect improvements in student learning.

Focus on Departments

For the 2003-2004 academic year, reporting of the data collected by the Office of Academic Affairs focused primarily on the needs of departments. These reports were directed at DACs and the SAC, and summarized the thousands of individual student assessment scores collected through the roster exchange process shown above. The department reports were designed to summarize results across an entire department, to disaggregate these results by discipline for those departments with more than one discipline, to disaggregate results by performance indicator for those departments measuring more than one performance indicator, and to disaggregate by course identifier. In this initial year of the new assessment program we were also able to provide reports that linked assessment score to course grade and to the student's rank in high school.

Additional reports were devised to illustrate data aggregated at the institutional and divisional levels. These were created largely to facilitate discussion of assessment on campuses, and to provide an institutional context for the more complete reporting at the department level. There were no campus level assessment reports developed in 2003-2004.

The Reporting Cycle

The new reports were provided on a semester by semester basis. This allowed us to quickly test the reports and identify different aggregations or disaggregations of data that would be useful. Reports were produced and distributed electronically using the public folder system, and were distributed in hard copy for discussion at the assessment meetings, with the fall term data being distributed at the January meeting, and the spring term data being distributed and discussed at the summer meetings.

Access to Assessment Reports

Access to assessment reporting is controlled through the Outlook public folder system. Reports at the UWC level and at the divisional levels are accessible to all faculty and staff of the UWC. For 2003-2004 access to departmental reports was limited to the

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department chair and the department assessment coordinators. The assessment reports can be found by first navigating to:
[Public Folders/All Public Folders/Initiatives \(Colleges-wide\)/Assessment/Assessment Reports](#).
From here the path branches to folders containing UWC Reports, Divisional Reports, and Department Reports.

Use of Assessment Reports

In this first year of the new assessment program, one of the most important tasks was to use the data to evaluate the quality of the new assessment process, including an evaluation of our performance indicators and the corresponding rubrics. We looked for indicators of consistent application of the rubrics, and for indirect confirmation of assessment results through comparison with course grades and other indicators of academic performance, e.g. term GPA or high school rank. This approach to using the data as a basis for evaluating the quality of the assessment process has led to elimination or revision of some performance indicators, and to the revision of the corresponding rubrics.

Summary of Findings for 2003-2004

Department Findings

In this first year of the restructured assessment program, our summary of assessment scores and our reporting of those summaries focused on the academic departments. Academic departments are responsible for the curriculum and developing core general education skills and thus played the primary role in writing both the performance indicators for the assessed proficiency, and the evaluative assessment rubrics used by instructors when assigning assessment scores. The academic departments, as represented by department assessment coordinators and department chairs, were in the best position to judge and comment upon the effectiveness of our data collection and reporting efforts.

Departmental reports summarized the collected assessment scores in a variety of ways, and compared these scores to a limited range of other student performance data. Comparisons were used both to explore the relationship between assessment and other forms of student performance evaluation, and as a rough check on the assigned assessment scores

Institution-wide Findings

In addition to the departmental reporting we also produced a limited number of divisional and UWC-wide reports. These included summaries of assessment scores by performance indicators, and comparisons of assessment scores to course grades. When looking at these reports with data aggregated at a higher level it is important to note that there was considerable variation among departments.

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Perhaps the most immediately apparent finding was that no department chose to assess one of the analytical skills performance indicators: construct and support hypotheses and arguments (A2). The department assessment coordinators, in consultation with instructors, felt that this performance indicator was too close to another of the analytical skills performance indicators: select and apply scientific and other appropriate methodologies (A3). The latter performance indicator (A3) was the second most frequently measured of all the analytical skills performance indicators. The task of reconsidering and rewording these two analytical skills indicators was given to the 2004-2005 SAC.

Only one academic department assessed one other analytical skills performance indicator: gather and assess information from printed sources, electronic sources, and observation (A6). It was decided that we would continue to use A6, and would encourage other departments to consider assessing this skill.

The other performance indicator for which there was limited use was: integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions (A4). In particular, in the spring semester only one department assessed this performance indicator. Much like our review of the A2 indicator, department assessment coordinators reported that instructors saw an overlap with another performance indicator: analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret information and ideas (A1), with the emphasis on integration in A4 being a little too close to the emphasis on synthesis in A1. Therefore, like the A2 performance indicator, the task of reconsidering and rewording the A4 and A1 performance indicators was given to the 2004-2005 SAC.

Table 2 summarizes the 2003-2004 assessment results by performance indicator across all departments, further dividing the results by term. Results for the fall term summarize assessments done in high enrolling, generally introductory courses. Results for the spring term summarize assessments done in sophomore level courses.

- Roughly three quarters of assessments indicated that students either met or exceeded expectations as measured using the common evaluative rubric for the performance indicator.
- For four of the five performance indicators used, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations dropped when comparing the spring semester (sophomore level courses) with the fall semester (high enrolling courses). In the case of integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions (A4), the drop was significant, however it must be noted that A4 was used by two departments in the fall term but only one in the spring term.

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Table 2: 2003-2004 Institutional Assessment Results Summary

| Performance Indicator | Count | Exceeds Expectations | | Meets Expectations | | Fails To Meet Expectations | |
|---|-------|----------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| | | Fall | Spring | Fall | Spring | Fall | Spring |
| A1 <i>Analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret information and ideas</i> | 6872 | 30% | 32% | 48% | 47% | 22% | 21% |
| A3 <i>Select and apply scientific and other appropriate technologies</i> | 3209 | 30% | 35% | 45% | 40% | 25% | 26% |
| A4 <i>Integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions</i> | 637 | 26% | 28% | 50% | 37% | 24% | 35% |
| A5 <i>Recognize fallacies and inconsistencies</i> | 936 | 38% | 35% | 47% | 48% | 15% | 18% |
| A6 <i>Gather and assess information from printed sources, electronic sources, and observation.</i> | 330 | 19% | 32% | 60% | 46% | 21% | 22% |

Comparing Assessment Scores to Course Grades

A comparison was made between assessment scores and course grades for each of the performance indicators. Of course, there is no explicit or implicit relationship between these two measures of student performance. The course grade is a measurement of mastery of all course material while the assessment score is a measurement of performance on a single instrument designed to measure mastery of a specific skill. However, if we understand that the immediate goal of students is to master the course material, and if the performance indicator chosen for assessment has been chosen because it is a skill that is necessary for success in that course, then a better understanding of the relationship between assessment scores and course grades may be useful when seeking to improve teaching or curriculum.

If we divide the range of possible grades into three sub-ranges roughly corresponding to our evaluative rubrics for assessment scores, then grades of A or B would be matched to an assessment of exceeds expectations; grades of B or C would be matched to an assessment of meets expectations; and grades of D or F would be matched to an assessment of fails to meet expectations. Taken in aggregate across all performance indicators, these comparisons correspond to our findings for assessment scores of “E” (exceeds expectations) and “M” (meets expectations).

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Among all “E” assessment scores,

- 85% of the corresponding grades were either A or B.
- This compared to 46% with either B or C, and 3% with either D or F.

Among all “M” assessment scores,

- 72% of the corresponding grades were either B or C.
- This compared to 60% with either A or B, and 10% with either D or F.

However, this comparison between assessment score and grade range did not hold for “X” (fails to meet expectations) assessments. Among all “X” assessment scores,

- 37% of the corresponding grades were either D or F;
- 58% were either B or C, and 27% were either A or B.

Broken out by individual grade, the most frequently occurring grade for students assessed as failing to meet expectations was C at 36% with the next most frequent being B at 21%, then D at 20%, F at 17% and A at 5%.

In Table 3, assessment scores are aggregated by assessment score and performance indicator, and are limited by the most frequently occurring grade range for each assessment score as explained above. For example, for those students who exceeded expectations in assessments of the A1 performance indicator, 86% received a grade of either A or B. For those students who met expectations for the A1 performance indicator, 75% received a grade of B or C. And for those students who failed to meet expectations for the A1 performance indicator, 64% received a grade of B or C.

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Table 3: Assessment Score to Grade Range Comparison

| Assessment Score | Grade Range | Performance Indicator | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Exceeds Expectations | A or B | A1 | 86% |
| | | A3 | 81% |
| | | A4 | 89% |
| | | A5 | 79% |
| | | A6 | 95% |
| Meets Expectations | B or C | A1 | 75% |
| | | A3 | 73% |
| | | A4 | 65% |
| | | A5 | 67% |
| | | A6 | 48% |
| Fails to meet expectations | B or C | A1 | 64% |
| | | A3 | 47% |
| | | A4 | 51% |
| | | A5 | 69% |
| | | A6 | 54% |

A1-Analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret information and ideas.

A3-Select and apply scientific and other appropriate methodologies.

A4-Integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions.

A5-Recognize fallacies and inconsistencies.

A6-Gather and assess information from printed sources, electronic sources, and observation.

Testing for Consistent Application of Assessment Rubrics

Following months of collaborative work developing common evaluative criteria (the assessment rubrics) for measuring proficiency in analytical skills, we hoped that these rubrics were being applied consistently, not only at the department course level, but across departments as well. One way to check for consistent application is to count students who received both an “E” for exceeds expectations, and an “X” for fails to meet expectations for the same performance indicator. In general, because the rubrics are to be consistently applied across all departments and divisions this should be an infrequent occurrence.

The result of this review is illustrated in Table 4. Only the performance indicators A1 and A3 were used since these were the only performance indicators assessed by departments in all three divisions.

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Table 4: Assessment Score Comparisons

| Performance Indicator→ | A1 | | | A3 | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | Number with both “E” and “X” | Number with 2 or more assessments | Percent with both “E” and “X” | Number with both “E” and “X” | Number with 2 or more assessments | Percent with both “E” and “X” |
| UWC | 141 | 1455 | 10% | 31 | 358 | 9% |
| Humanities | 10 | 217 | 5% | | | |
| Natural Sciences and Math | 12 | 76 | 16% | | | |
| Social Sciences | 23 | 184 | 13% | 8 | 94 | 9% |

These data show that across the UW Colleges, 10% of students with two or more assessments of the A1 performance indicator, and 9% of students with two or more assessments of the A3 performance indicator received both an “E” for exceeds expectations, and an “X” for fails to meet expectations.

If we restrict the analysis to students who received both an E and an X for courses in the same division, then the results show that for the A1 performance indicator, relatively fewer students in the Humanities showed this pattern, while relatively more students in the Natural Sciences and Math and in the Social Sciences received both an E and an X assessment. No students in either the Humanities or in the Natural Sciences and Mathematics received both an E and an X for the A3 performance indicator. Further restricting the analysis to students who received both an E and an X for courses in the same department results in too few students to be meaningful.

Other Efforts in Assessment

In addition to the assessment of general education skills and discipline specific breadth of knowledge skills, the Office of Academic Affairs engaged in a number of assessment activities. These activities were focused on the Engaging Students in the First Year (ESFY) initiative, and on overall institutional effectiveness.

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Engaging Students in the First Year

The assessment of the UW Colleges ESFY initiative utilized two approaches. The first was a review of available student and curricular information with a focus on tracking program participation and student retention. The second approach involved the administration of a nation-wide survey to students participating in freshman seminars (LEC 100). Through the use of this survey we hoped to gain a better understanding of student impressions of the LEC 100 curriculum.

Assessment of the ESFY: tracking program participation

The UW Colleges is committed to increasing availability and participation in first-year seminars. Table 5 illustrates growth over the past five years, with particularly large increases in 2003, the first year of the ESFY initiative.

Table 5: Growth in First-Year Seminars

| Fall Term | Enrollment | Sections | Instructors |
|-----------|------------|----------|-------------|
| 1999 | 557 | 25 | 17 |
| 2000 | 719 | 34 | 22 |
| 2001 | 764 | 38 | 28 |
| 2002 | 784 | 38 | 26 |
| 2003 | 1307 | 62 | 53 |

Besides tracking growth in LEC 100 classes, we are also interested in the characteristics of students taking these classes. A goal of the ESFY program is to enroll a population of students in LEC 100 classes that mirrors the make-up of the overall freshman population. For 2003, we focused on several characteristics:

- Course load – In fall 2003 the population taking LEC 100 was disproportionately full-time, with nearly 90% of students enrolled full-time as compared to 58% of the overall freshman class
- Gender – the gender make-up of students taking LEC 100 in fall 2003 showed a proportionate mix. Approximately 52% of students in these classes were female as compared to 54% of all freshmen.
- Age make-up – The population of students taking LEC 100 in the fall of 2003 was disproportionately of traditional age with 91% of students less than 22 years old as compared to only 78% of the overall freshman class.
- High school rank – The population of students enrolled in LEC 100 classes in the fall of 2003 was distributed across the four high school quartiles in roughly the same proportions as the overall new freshman population. Approximately 47% percent of students in both the LEC 100 classes and in the overall new freshman class came from the bottom half of their high school class.

Looking at these four characteristics we find that the UW Colleges will need to take steps to encourage and enable greater enrollment in LEC 100 on the part of part-time and non-traditional age students.

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Assessment of the ESFY: tracking student retention

A second area of interest in our assessment ESFY is the area of retention. In particular, for 2003-2004 we were interested in tracking the numbers of students from LEC 100 classes who were retained to a second term, as compared to students who did not enroll in LEC 100.

The rate of fall to spring retention for fall 2003 new freshman who took LEC 100 was 86.1%. This compares favorably to the retention rate of 79.5% for students who did not take LEC 100. When we include the student's high school rank in our measurement, we then find that the LEC 100 new freshmen from the top and bottom half of their graduating class respectively were retained at rates of 90% and 84%. This compares to retention rates for non-LEC 100 new freshmen of 86% and 77% for top and bottom half respectively.

Assessment of the ESFY: First Year Initiative Survey

The second approach to assessment of ESFY in 2003-2004 was through the use of a survey instrument. The instrument chosen was the First Year Initiative survey, designed by Educational Benchmarking Incorporated specifically to measure the effectiveness of first-year programs. The survey was administered in LEC 100 classes near the end of the fall 2003 term. All of the 62 sections were invited to participate. Of these, 50 sections from 11 different campuses participated with 758 completed surveys received. This represents 58% of the total enrollment in LEC 100 classes.

The results from these completed surveys were summarized at the course/section, campus, and institutional (UWC) levels. The 70 questions in the survey were grouped into 15 constructs or factors based upon a statistical relationship among the factors. These 15 factors represent known characteristics of successful first-year programs. The factors are:

1. Course improved study strategies
2. Course improved academic and cognitive skills
3. Course improved critical thinking
4. Course improved connections with faculty
5. Course improved connections with peers
6. Course increased out-of-class engagement
7. Course improved knowledge of campus policies
8. Course improved knowledge of academic services
9. Course improved managing time and priorities
10. Course improved knowledge of wellness
11. Sense of belonging and acceptance
12. Usefulness of course readings
13. Satisfaction with college/university
14. Course included engaging pedagogy
15. Overall Course effectiveness

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The last factor, “Overall Course effectiveness,” was used as a dependent variable when processing the survey results. All other factors were analyzed to determine the extent to which they might predict a student’s impression of overall course effectiveness.

For example, answers to questions that related to knowledge of campus policies (factor 7) were found to have little or no relationship to the answers relating to overall course effectiveness. The answers to these questions could not help us predict how students would answer the questions relating to overall course effectiveness. Thus, factor 7, “course improved knowledge of campus policies,” though known to be important in constructing a successful first-year program, was not important to our students in their assessment of what makes up a successful first-year seminar.

On the other hand, questions relating to the “usefulness of course readings” (factor 12) were found to have a close relationship to questions about overall course effectiveness. The answers students gave to questions relating to course readings were very helpful in predicting how those same students would answer questions about overall course effectiveness. Thus we would say that in the minds of our students, the usefulness of course readings was a very important part of a successful first-year seminar.

For fall 2003, the results of this survey indicated that there were seven factors that were important to our students in their assessment of the freshman seminar. These seven factors were:

| Factor | Rank |
|--|-------------|
| Usefulness of Course Readings | Top |
| Course Improved Managing Time and Priorities | 2nd |
| Satisfaction with College/University | 3rd |
| Course Improved Connections with Peers | 4th |
| Course Included Engaging Pedagogy | 5th |
| Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement | 6th |
| Course Improved Study Strategies | 7th |

Of these seven factors, the usefulness of course readings was found to be more than twice as important as any other in contributing to a student’s impression of overall course effectiveness.

The ESFY assessment information collected in 2003-2004 was shared with a group of faculty and staff who convened at the UW Baraboo campus in April 2004 to discuss a wide variety of topics relating to the ESFY initiative.

Overall Institutional Effectiveness

In addition to our assessment of student learning both at the institutional and discipline level, and our assessment of the first-year program, the Office of Academic Affairs continues to engage in assessment of institutional effectiveness. Institutional assessments focus on the ways the institution, as “the freshman-sophomore, liberal arts transfer

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institution of the University of Wisconsin System” is fulfilling its mission, in particular that part of the select mission “to plan and to deliver the freshman-sophomore year of baccalaureate programs and professional studies.” Our expectation is that students enrolled in the UW Colleges will transfer to four-year baccalaureate degree granting institutions, and will successfully complete programs at those institutions. Thus, the successful transfer of students has become a focus of our institutional assessment efforts.

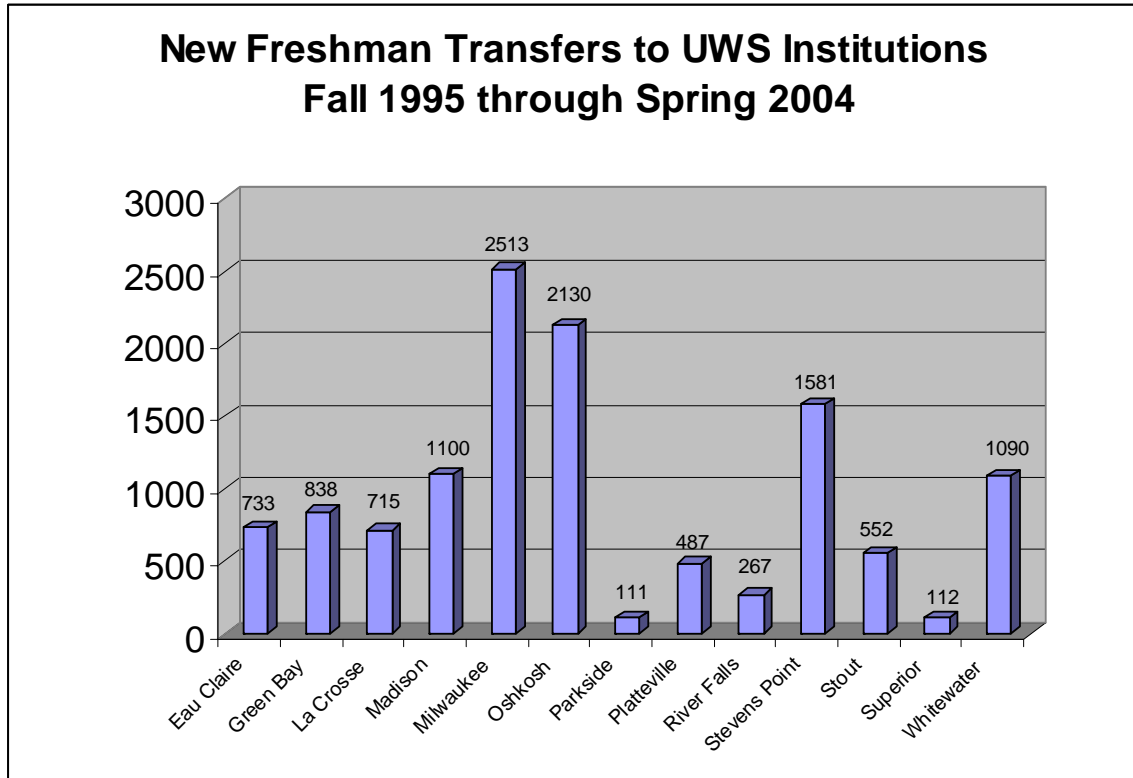
Because of our participation in the University of Wisconsin System, our primary focus has been on the tracking of students within the UW System. This tracking is accomplished through collaboration with the UW System Office of Policy Analysis and Research (OPAR). By means of a regular exchange of information we are able to track the transfer destinations of our students, to identify concurrent enrollments, to track the persistence of students beyond transfer, and to measure success in terms of graduations and majors. Tracking of a much more limited nature is done for students transferring to other colleges and universities through a national student clearing house.

Tracking Transfers within the UWS: Transfer Destinations

Table 6 shows the UW System transfer destinations for UW Colleges’ new freshmen who have transferred in the period indicated. This information is provided to campuses and central office administrators through the public folder system, and includes reporting in aggregate (across all campuses) as well as for each campus. The data show that across the UW Colleges the top three UW System transfer destinations are Milwaukee, Oshkosh and Stevens Point.

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Table 6



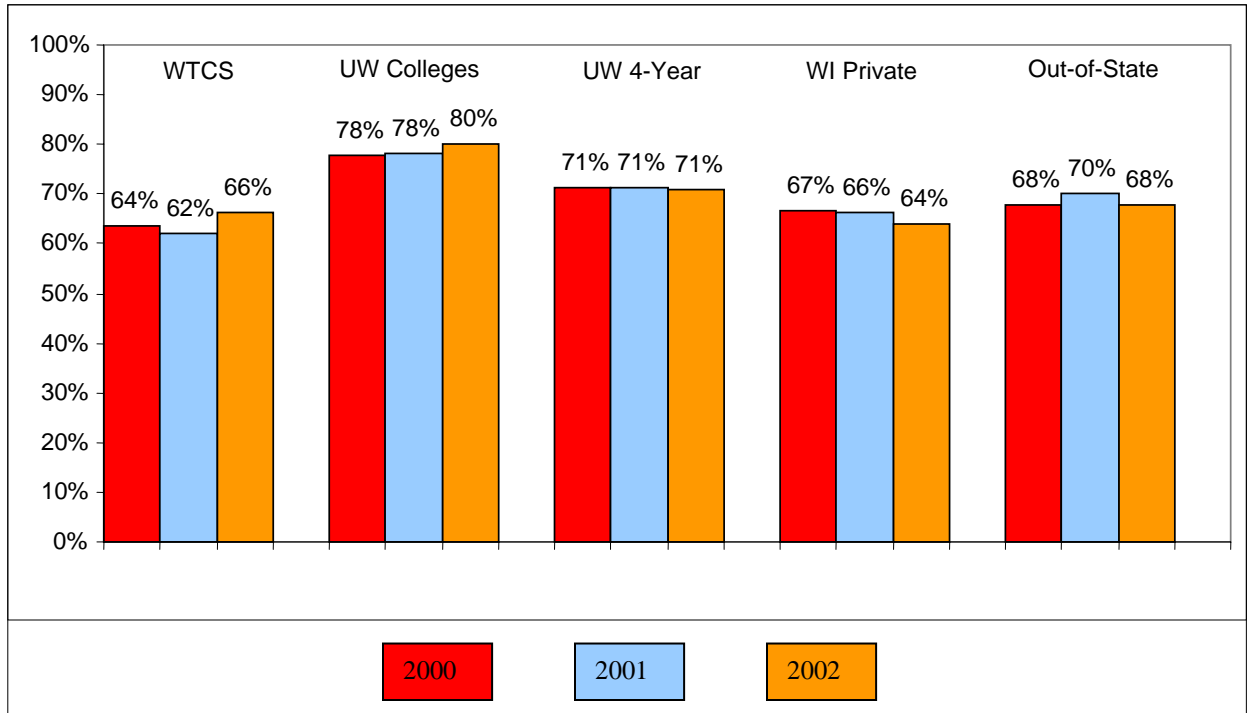
Tracking Transfers within the UWS: Transfer Persistence and Degree Attainment

In addition to our own efforts in tracking UW Colleges' transfers, OPAR annually publishes a report which includes summary information regarding transfer persistence and degree attainment. This report is particularly helpful in that it compares and contrasts the performance of UW Colleges' students with the performance of transfers from both the other UW System institutions, and transfers from the Wisconsin Technical Colleges system.

In Table 7 the persistence of students to a second year of enrollment following transfer is illustrated for transfers occurring in the UW System in the fall terms 2000 – 2002. The data is disaggregated based upon the type of sending institution. These data indicate that UW Colleges' transfers persisted at the highest rate of any group of transfers to UW System schools.

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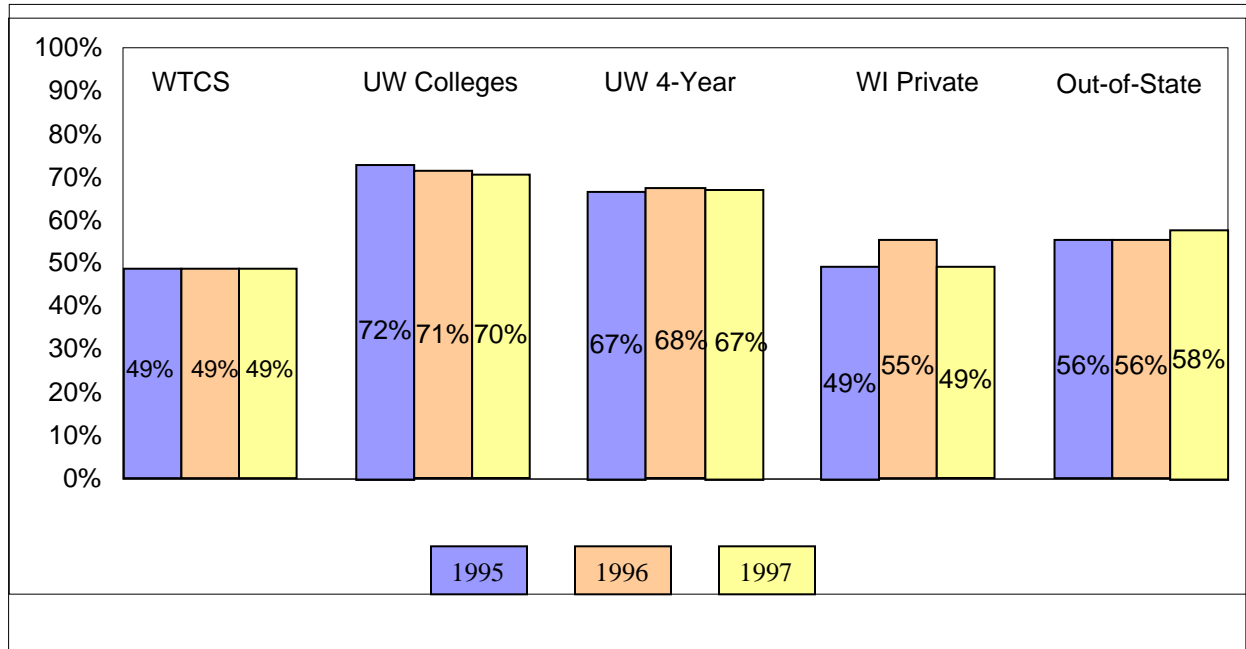
Table 7: Persistence Following Transfer



Another indication of the relative success of UW Colleges' transfers is in the area of degree attainment. In the chart below fifth year graduation/sixth year retention rates for UW System transfers are compared by type of sending institution, broken out by first year of UWS enrollment. As with the persistence data shown above, UW Colleges' transfers complete baccalaureate programs at the highest rate of any transfers to the UW System.

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**Table 8: Fifth Year Graduation/ Sixth Year Retention Rates
for UW System Transfer Students
by Type of Sending Institution and UWS Enrollment Year**



Tracking Transfers within the UWS: Student Retention

An important piece of information we have learned through the tracking of transfers is the relationship between time of transfer and transfer success. In summarizing the degree attainment experience of UW Colleges' transfers who began with the colleges between 1993 and 1996, we find the following:

- Of the students who transfer as freshmen (complete fewer than 30 credits prior to transfer), approximately 60% complete the bachelors degree
- Of the students who transfer as sophomores (complete between 30 and 60 credits prior to transfer), approximately 70% complete the bachelors degree
- Of the students who transfer as upper-classmen (complete 60 or more credits prior to transfer), approximately 80% complete the bachelors degree

These findings confirm the importance of our continuing emphasis upon the tracking of student retention within the UW Colleges as a measure of institutional effectiveness. In our reporting of retention information for the 2003-2004 academic year, we found that our overall retention rate for full-time new freshmen was 58%. This is identical to our rate from the year before.

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Summary

This 2003-2004 UW Colleges Institutional Assessment Report accounts for changes in our assessment program and the processes by which we implemented them in a watershed year for institutional assessment in the UW Colleges. While the accomplishments detailed in this report are the result of efforts across the entire institution, the Senate Assessment Committee, department assessment coordinators, the Institutional Assessment Coordinator and other members of the Office of Academic Affairs provided the leadership for those efforts.

Without a doubt, these activities and accomplishments of the UW Colleges Assessment Program during the 2003-2004 academic year were prompted by the Higher Learning Commission's review of our approach to assessment in the period covered in our self-study for continued accreditation. However, the changes flowed from a solid base of ongoing attention to evaluation of the academic performance of our students while attending the UW Colleges and upon transfer to other institutions of higher education. Following the leadership of the Chancellor and the Provost, the faculty, instructional academic staff and administrators who were the elected and appointed leaders of the institution's assessment program addressed the concerns of the HLC within the ongoing procedures of our shared governance system. In the course of eighteen months, changes designed to institutionalize assessment in the UW Colleges and track the results were drafted, debated, approved and implemented at the department and institutional levels.

The data generated in this important transitional year for assessment in the UW Colleges pointed to necessary refinements at the conceptual and evaluative levels: performance indicators were to be clarified and department assessment tools honed. Those tasks were taken up by the institutional and department assessment leaders in 2004-2005. In addition, spreading a culture of assessment to the campuses and support services was outlined as a focus in 2004-2005 with leadership to be provided by the institutional assessment coordinator, campus deans, campus assessment coordinators and the Office of Academic Affairs. Assessment efforts in program areas, such as the Engaging Students in the First Year initiative, were expanded. All of these ongoing efforts are important to fulfilling the select mission of the UW Colleges.

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Appendices

Appendix 1A

Degree Proficiencies Beginning of Reporting Period

The UW Colleges is guided by the principles that a love of learning and a sense of identity, integrity, truth, beauty, and community benefit both the student and society. Given these principles and our mission to provide students with the proficiencies needed for further success, the UWC regards the following areas of proficiency to be of primary importance in the education of our students.

The proficiencies will permeate the courses we offer. We expect that with the acquisition of the Associate degree, students will have taken at least one course, and in most cases, several, which will address each proficiency. Assessment methods to determine student progress toward acquisition of the proficiencies at the course level have been developed. Students may be required to participate in assessment testing as a condition of receiving the degree.

1. Clear and Logical Thinking

The informed and disciplined use of rational thought in collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing information, and in framing and addressing “problems,” as well as constructing and supporting logical arguments has long been and must remain a fundamental goal of higher education. Students must be able to:

- Analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret information and ideas,
- Construct and support hypotheses and arguments
- Distinguish knowledge, values, beliefs, and opinions,
- Select and apply scientific and other appropriate methodologies,
- Solve quantitative and mathematical problems,
- Interpret graphs, tables, and diagrams,
- Use statistics appropriately and accurately,
- Integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions,
- Evaluate situations of social responsibility,
- Make decisions based on an informed understanding of the moral and ethical issues involved, and
- Articulate accurately strengths and weaknesses of one’s own work.

2. Effective Communication

Students must develop and demonstrate proficiency in sharing knowledge with other people. Students must be able to:

- Read and listen with comprehension and critical perception,
- Recognize fallacies and inconsistencies,

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- Respond to the media actively and analytically,
- Write clearly, precisely, and in a well organized manner,
- Develop a large and varied vocabulary,
- Recognize and use a variety of written communication forms and styles,
- Transmit information effectively through skillful speech delivery,
- Respond orally to questions and challenges,
- Recognize and use a variety of oral communication forms and styles,
- Work collaboratively as part of a team,
- Understand and communicate with people different from themselves,
- Gather information from printed sources, electronic sources, and observation,
- Use computer technologies for communication and problem solving, and
- Learn independently, stimulating and satisfying intellectual curiosity.

3. Aesthetic Response

For an enhanced awareness and appreciation of art and the power and importance of creativity in human life, students need to develop and demonstrate aesthetic understanding and skill. Students must be able to:

- Employ and expand the imagination,
- Engage in creative expression, and
- Respond to the natural world and creative expression with knowledge and sensitivity.

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Appendix 1B

Assessment of Student Learning from the 2005-2007 UW Colleges Catalog

The mission of the University of Wisconsin Colleges includes preparing students for success at the baccalaureate level by providing the first two years of a liberal arts general education. An important element of fulfilling this mission is meaningful institution-wide assessment of student learning. The goal of the UW Colleges' assessment program is to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum, programs, and services of the institution. This program includes measuring curricular and co-curricular experiences and activities that nurture students' intellectual development. The Office of Academic Affairs and the Senate Assessment Committee, along with committees at each campus and in every department, have brought together faculty, professional and instructional academic staff, students and administrators to develop and implement assessment measures.

Carrying out this mission, the UW Colleges commits to developing in students a set of proficiencies that prepares them for baccalaureate and professional programs, for lifelong learning, and for leadership, service, and responsible citizenship. To provide students with the skills for success in these roles, the UW Colleges regards the following areas of proficiency to be of primary importance in the education of our students: Analytical Skills, Quantitative Skills, Communication Skills, and Aesthetic Skills. To assess student learning in these four areas, instructors measure student proficiency using common standards, applied across the academic disciplines. The accumulated results are then used as the basis for implementing changes in teaching and curriculum.

In addition to the assessment of institution-wide proficiencies, each academic department within the UW Colleges assesses discipline-specific proficiencies. When assessing student mastery of these discipline-specific proficiencies, instructors use common standards developed within each department. The results from these assessment activities are used to improve student learning and teaching within the department.

For each of the four areas of proficiency identified above, we establish expectations for satisfactory performance and communicate those expectations to our students. Then we gather evidence on performance indicators for curricular experiences and activities and interpret the data collected. Our specific areas of proficiency and their performance indicators are as follows:

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I. Analytical Skills

Students must be able to:

- interpret and synthesize information and ideas,
- analyze and evaluate arguments,
- construct hypotheses and support arguments,
- select and apply scientific and other appropriate methodologies,
- integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions, and
- gather and assess information from printed sources, electronic sources, and observation.

II. Quantitative Skills

Students must be able to:

- solve quantitative and mathematical problems,
- interpret graphs, tables, and diagrams, and
- use statistics appropriately and accurately.

III. Communication Skills

Students must be able to:

- read, observe, and listen with comprehension and critical perception,
- communicate clearly, precisely, and in a well-organized manner,
- demonstrate a large and varied vocabulary,
- recognize and use a variety of communication forms and styles, and
- use computer technologies for communication.

IV. Aesthetic Skills

Students must be able to:

- engage with and critically reflect on a work of creative expression, and
- discuss their engagement with and critical reflection on a work of creative expression.

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Appendix 2

Faculty, Staff and Administrative Leadership 2003-2004

2003-2004 Senate Assessment Committee

Ken Grant
Aubrey Baehman (interim student services representative)
Richard Flannery
Greg Lampe – ex-officio (Institutional Assessment Coordinator)
Paul Martin (interim chair)
Holly Hassel
Michael Moscicke, {interim student representative }

2003-2004 Department Assessment Coordinators

Anthropology/Sociology – Renee Gralewicz
Art – Berel Lutsky
Biological Sciences – Laura Lee
Business/Economics – Abbas Taheri
Chemistry – Juan Lozano
Communication and Theatre Arts – Barry Liss
Computer Science, Engineering, Physics and Astronomy –
Paul Erdman; Dennis Crossley
English – Holly Hassel and Nancy Chick
Foreign Languages – Nancy Waldman
Geography/Geology – Bob McCallister
History – Dan Kallgren
Mathematics – Paul Martin
Music – Pat Eby
Philosophy – Doug Hosler
Physical Education – Noreen Ferrari
Political Science – Richard Flannery
Psychology – Dennis Carpenter

2003-2004 Institutional Assessment Coordinator

Associate Vice Chancellor Greg Lampe

Other members of the Office of Academic Affairs

Professional Development Coordinator - Shirley Hensch
Senior Information Manager - Gregg Nettesheim